



**CITY OF MESA**  
**HUMAN RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD (HRAB)**  
**VETERANS TASK FORCE TEAM (VTF)**

January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013 Minutes

640 N. Mesa Dr. Mesa  
9am-12pm

In attendance: Rory Gilbert, Chair of the Human Relations Advisory Board  
Denise Heap, Vice Chair of the Human Relations Advisory Board  
Barbara Allison  
Vanessa Atusso  
Doug Dau  
Corey Harris  
Ken Harper  
Shirley Kosisky  
David Lucier  
Heather McAlister  
Gina Nesbit  
Joseph Panagakis  
Ron Perkins  
Ron Shackle  
Ruth Giese, Mesa City Staff

1. Welcome and Introductions by Rory Gilbert, Chair of the Human Relations Advisory Board.

Ms. Gilbert welcomed those present and then introduced Mayor Smith.

2. Greeting and Welcoming remarks from Mayor Scott Smith.

Mayor Scott Smith thanked those present for taking time to assist the City of Mesa to find ways to assist Veterans in Mesa. Mayor Smith discussed the importance of supporting Veterans as they reintegrate into civilian life and that the Veterans Task Force could find ways to guide newly returning veterans to the resources they need most. The Task Force members then had the opportunity to introduce themselves to Mayor Smith.

3. Explanation on the purpose of the Veterans Task Force by Denise Heap, Vice Chair of the Human Relations Advisory Board.

Ms. Heap gave a summary of how the Human Relations Board was asked by Mayor Smith to develop a Veterans Task Force in order to find ways that the City of Mesa could support Veterans in Mesa. The Human Relations board created an Ad Hoc committee as part of its 2012-13 strategic plan. By bringing together stakeholders who have expertise in Veterans issues, the board hopes to develop recommendations that can be forwarded to Mayor and City Council.

4. What can the City of Mesa do to create a supportive and welcoming environment for veterans?  
Ms. Gilbert facilitated group discussion to respond to the question of how the City of Mesa can create a supportive and welcoming environment for Veterans. The following is a summary of said discussion:

- a. What resources already exist?
  - Education and Training
    - East Valley Veterans Education Center
    - Veteran's Centers at ASU – comprehensive
    - Department of Economic Security Veteran Counselor – Dale Groen very helpful with unemployment

*Supporting data is available for public review in the Diversity & Neighborhood Outreach Office,  
20 E. Main St., Suite 250, Mesa, Arizona 85201 (480) 644-5034*

- Department of Economic Security – job training, resume writing
  - In state tuition for all vets
- Jobs and Economic Opportunity
  - United Way – financial literacy
  - United Way – AmeriCorps
  - Veterans Affairs – homeless program – Stand Down
  - Disabled American Veterans – Service claim assistance and other applications and advocacy
  - Veterans Affairs - Chandler office of Veterans – information and referrals, employment program
  - National guard – employment program
  - Soldier support center
  - Disabled American Veterans – job listings from DES
  - Veterans Affairs Phoenix – Vocational Rehab
  - Women's transitional living center (first one)
  - State tax exemptions for hiring vets
- Health and Wellness
  - United Way – home support
  - Medical transition assistance from Department of Defense to Veterans Affairs
- Other
  - Housing assistance
  - Veteran's designation for driver's licenses (bill to create data case)
  - AZ dept. of veteran's services
    - Administer federal programs
    - State programs
    - Directory
    - Advise government
  - Sinema – Veterans Advisory Council
  - Arizona Veterans Services Advisory Commission
- b. What needs have not been met?
  - Needs
    - More homeless services for Vets
    - Readiness for schooling – transitional services
    - How do vets know where to go?
      - Mish mash of services
      - Disabled American Veterans is not known to new vets
      - No way to reach vets
    - Vets do not know their eligibility – definition of a veteran
    - Vietnam Era Vets distrust government – avoid identification and recognition
    - Marketing of services
    - Gap between Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs for medical transitions (HIPAA obstacles)
    - Home of record issue when applying to college (Mesa Community College)
    - Public schools being welcoming and supportive of veterans and families by providing information
- c. How can the community fill the gaps?
  - Jobs and Economic Opportunity
    - More homeless services for vets
    - **Mesa Job fair in collaboration with Department of Economic Security and East Valley Veterans Education Center (3)**

- ***Veteran's campus on MacDonald – shelter, clinic, dental, education (6)***
- Mesa Stand Down
- Transfer of licensures for family members
- Education and Training
  - Ensure instate tuition access
  - Educate spouses/partners regarding benefits
  - East Valley Veterans Education Center Mesa location (1)
- Health and Wellness
  - Transitional/readiness services
  - Identify needs of families
  - ***Mesa Public Schools family support for active duty families – information and referral, financial assistance, day care, connection with Family Support Groups (3)***
  - Veteran's court – Phoenix Model (2)
  - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder support
  - Suicide Prevention
- Other
  - Open driver's license data base to veteran's services
  - Reaching veterans
    - ***Clarifying/listing services (5)***
    - Using social media
    - Veteran supportive city designation (2)
    - Information regarding veteran's services provided with utility hook up (1)
    - Preferential hiring
    - Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

5. What can the City of Mesa do to help fill the gaps?

Ms. Gilbert asked that team members break into small groups to respond to the question of what can the City of Mesa do to help fill the gaps to create a supportive and welcoming environment for Veterans. The following is a summary of those recommendations:

- a. Small group action recommendations: Group I
  - Jobs
    - Local job fair (easy task)
      - Mesa Department of Economic Security office
      - How do we let Veterans know?
        - Utility fliers
        - Website
    - Transition assistance – mock job interviews
    - Veteran's employment – help convert military language to civilian
    - Outline Mesa resources
    - Employers must have actual jobs available
    - Employee Support of the Guard and Reserve – can recommend
    - United Arizona Veterans – can get job fair information to main veteran's organization
    - Make sure East Valley Veterans Education Center attends
  - Education
    - Community college set up briefings specific to Veterans – does exist

- East Valley Veterans Education Center rep downtown – city offer space
- Health/wellness
  - Veterans Court – assist with charges and fines related to veterans
    - Need judge to support
- b. Small group action recommendation: Group II and Group III
  - Veterans shelter on MacDonald
    - Grants available
    - Purchase
    - Operating expenses
  - Social media – generational differences – targeted strategy
    - Peer military style approach
    - Bills to release information
    - Veteran's homes
  - Create Mesa Police Department forum for veterans
  - Stand down in Mesa
  - Expand transfer of licensure for profession and recognition – services to widows, spouses, significant others, survivors
  - Education of spouses/ significant others on veterans benefits

6. Closing remarks.

The task force agreed to meet again. Proposed dates include Saturday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, February 23<sup>rd</sup> or March 2<sup>nd</sup>. With assistance from city staff, a date will be selected and task force members will be notified.

Submitted By:



---

Ruth Giese,  
Diversity Program Administrator